

13 things: Archaeology, material culture, science studies and design ARCH0300

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MWF 1:00-1:50 Watson, Room 116

Each week explores a different approach to the study of things. Material culture studies, archaeology, science studies, design studies, consumption studies, the sociology of technology, phenomenology, etc.; the course will explore a range of approaches in dealing with 13 things: the wheel, a Neolithic Megalith, an Ancient Greek perfume jar, the castle of Acrocorinth, a watermill, a map, the pocket watch, barbed wire, the light bulb, the blade, the portable radio, the camera, and the personal computer. Placing emphasis on questions of human/thing relations over the long term, the course critically questions the importance of goods, artifacts and stuff for humanity. Designed to appeal to a wide range of students, the course builds a rich toolkit to aid in the 'unpacking' of thing from a number of angles. Students are charged with the task of selecting a thing, whether ancient or contemporary, and researching it building on the perspectives encountered in the course.

Assessment

This course emphasizes project-based learning. Project-based learning involves the creative and critical integration of the topics (concepts, ideas, approaches, questions, etc.) detailed, and the skills attained, throughout the course within the study of a thing chosen by each course member. Collaboration among course members is welcome and encouraged.

Class members are required to develop their projects over the course of the semester by meeting a number of milestones at set dates—from specifying a thing to writing a project proposal to completing the final assignment. Emphasis will be placed upon collaboration and exchange through the course wiki located at:

<http://proteus.brown.edu/13things/home>

Projects will take the form of either a wiki-based portfolio or a classic paper-based essay. These should be the equivalent of 8 to 10 pages total.

Assessment breakdown: class participation (including reading discussion), meeting milestones and collaboration = 40%, final project = 60%.

Proviso: I reserve the right to select alternative readings if necessary.

Schedule

Week One (9/3-9/5): Things: An Introduction

- Aims and objectives
- Approaches to things

- Create a personal wiki page

Week Two (9/8-9/12): The Wheel

- Bulliet, R.W. 1990 [1975]: *The camel and the wheel*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.
- Latour, B. 1994. 'Pragmatogonies: A Mythical Account of How Humans and Nonhumans Swap Properties'. *The American Behavioral Scientist* 37: 791-808.

Week Three (9/15-9/19): a Neolithic megalith

- Tilley, C. 2004. *The Materiality of Stone. Explorations in Landscape Phenomenology*. Oxford: Berg.

Week Four (9/22-9/26): an Ancient Greek perfume jar

- Shanks, M. 1995. 'Art and an archaeology of embodiment: some aspects of archaic Greece'. *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* 5: 1-38.
- Shanks, M. 1999: *Art and the early Greek state*, Cambridge.

Everyone must select a thing for the project by Friday, September 26

Week Five (9/29-10/3): Acrocorinth (a castle in the Greek Peloponnesus)

- Andrews, K. 2006: *Castles of the Morea*. American School of Classical Studies at Athens.
- Johnson, M. 2002. *Behind the castle gate: from medieval to Renaissance*. London: Routledge.
- MacKay, P. 1968. Acrocorinth in 1668, a Turkish Account. *Hesperia*, 386-397.

Week Six (10/6-10/10): a Moroccan watermill (with a few comparisons from Crete)

- Cresswell, R. 1993: Of Mills and Waterwheels: The hidden parameters of technological choice. In P. Lemonnier (ed) *Technological Choices: Transformations in material cultures since the Neolithic*. London: Routledge.
- Reynolds, J. 1970: *Windmills & Watermills*. London: Hugh Evelyn Limited.

Project Proposal due Friday, October 10

Week Seven (10/15-10/17): a map

- Latour, B. 1986: Visualization and cognition. Thinking with eyes and hands, in H. Kuklick, and E. Long (eds), *Knowledge and society. Studies in the sociology of culture past and present* Vol. 6, 1-40.
- Turnbull, D. 1994: *Maps are territories. Science is an atlas*. The University of Chicago Press.

Week Eight (10/20-10/24): the pocket watch

Sobel, D. 1996: *Longitude*. London: 4th Estate.

Week Nine (10/27-10/31): the light bulb

- Hughes, T.P. 1983. *Networks of Power: Electrification in Western Society 1880-1930*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

- Hughes, T.P. 1985. 'Edison and electric light' in Mackenzie, D. and Wajcman, J. (eds.) *The Social Shaping of Technology: How the Refrigerator Got Its Hum*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

Week Ten (11/3-11/7): barbed wire

- Netz R. 2004. *Barbed Wire: An Ecology of Modernity*. Wesleyan University Press.

Week Eleven (11/10-11/14): The portable radio

- Schiffer, M. 1991. *The Portable Radio in American Life*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.
- Sterne, J. 2002. *The Audible Past. The Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction*. Duke University Press. (Selections TBA)

Week Twelve (11/16-11/21): the blade (including a detour through several thousand years of human evolution)

- Leroi-Gourhan, A. 1993. *Gesture and Speech*. Cambridge: The MIT Press. (Selections TBA)
- Wynn, T. 1985. Piaget, tools and the evolution of human intelligence. *World Archaeology* 17, 32-43.

Week Thirteen (11/24 and 12/1): a camera (Thanksgiving recess 11/26 and 11/27)

- Manovich, L. 2006: Visual technologies as cognitive prostheses: A short history of the externalization of the mind. In M. Smith and J. Morra (ed.) *The Prosthetic Impulse: From a Posthuman to a Biocultural Future*, The MIT Press.
- Crary, J. 1992: *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the 19th Century*. The MIT Press.

Week Fourteen: the personal computer (12/3-12/5)

- Eames, C.E. 1990. *A Computer Perspective: Background to the Computer Age*. Harvard University Press.
- Manovich, L., 2001: *The Language of New Media*, Cambridge, MA. (Selections TBA)

Week Fifteen (12/8-12/12): Project presentations

Final projects due: Friday December 12